

House Republican Press Release

May 17, 2005
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Miller To Offer Amendment Strengthening Bill to Provide Property Tax Relief for Elderly



A measure that would allow municipalities to freeze real estate property taxes for homeowners 80-years old or older should be modified to provide badly-needed tax relief for more elderly Connecticut residents, state Representative Lawrence G. Miller, R-122nd District, said today.

The legislation (Senate Bill 63), which was approved Monday by the General Assembly's Planning and Development Committee, would authorize Connecticut's cities and towns to freeze real estate property taxes for homeowners aged 80 or older. The property tax freeze would apply only to single 80-year-olds with annual incomes of \$16,200 or less and married couples earning \$20,000 or less, said Representative Miller, a Planning and Development Committee member who voted for the bill at Monday's meeting.

"This legislation is an excellent idea as far as it goes, which in my opinion, is not far enough," Representative Miller said. "If enacted, it will allow Connecticut municipalities to offer badly-needed property tax relief to elderly homeowners who are struggling to survive on fixed incomes that are at or below the poverty level. However, many elderly single people and couples living on incomes that are somewhat higher than the income eligibility guidelines the bill would set are having just as much trouble making ends meet and also should qualify for this tax relief."

"For that reason, I intend to offer an amendment that would enable senior homeowners 75-years or older whose incomes amount to 50 percent of the median income in their community to qualify for the benefit," Representative Miller said.

Representative Miller said the income guidelines that would qualify elderly homeowners for the property tax freeze under his proposal are similar to the income criteria for state rental assistance and the federal Section 8 Housing Program.

"Since a municipality's legislative body, either its town or city council or board of selectmen, would have to authorize the property tax relief before eligible elderly homeowners could qualify for it, it seems reasonable to me to modify the guidelines so that more seniors who want to continue living at home can do so without having to choose between paying for their food and medications and meeting their property tax obligations," Representative Miller said. "If a municipality can absorb the minimal loss in revenues from the tax freeze this bill currently proposes, it can certainly afford to make the benefit available to the few additional senior homeowners who would be eligible for it under the amendment I intend to offer."

In its current form, the bill would exempt Medicaid payments made on the homeowner's or his spouse's behalf from counting as income. It also would require the income limits to be adjusted annually to reflect the annual Social Security inflation adjustment, calculated to the nearest \$100, Representative Miller said.